



Natural Heritage &  
Endangered Species  
Program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife  
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MASSACHUSETTS ENDANGERED PLANTS

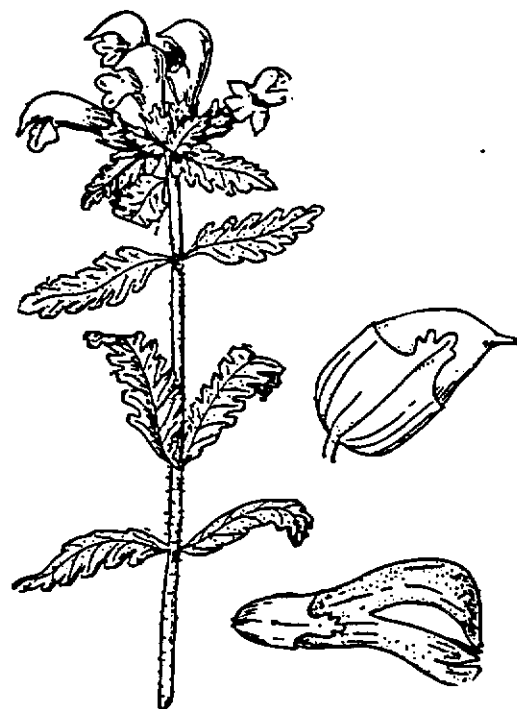
SWAMP LOUSEWORT

(*Pedicularis lanceolata*)

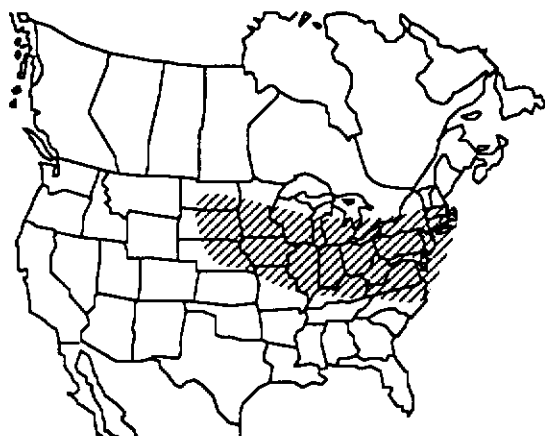
Description

Swamp Lousewort is an erect, herbaceous, showy-flowered perennial in the Snapdragon or Figwort family (Scrophulariaceae). Its genus name comes from the Latin *Pediculus*, for louse, and reflects the early European belief that sheep and cattle grazing near louseworts would pick up lice.

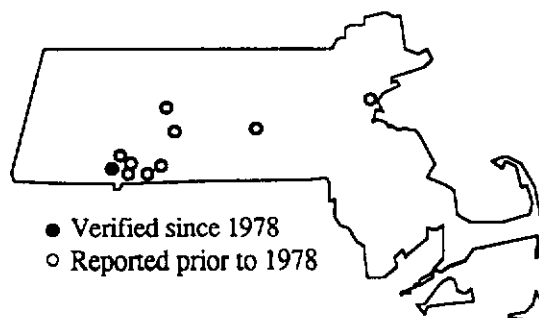
(*Wort* is an Anglo-Saxon term for plant.) The hairless, or nearly hairless, stems grow 3-9 dm (3/4 - 3 ft.) tall and usually occur singly. Swamp Lousewort's leaves are 5-10 cm (2 - 4 in.) long, stalkless or short-stalked, and mostly opposite. They are lanceolate in general outline and pinnately lobed, with the sinuses extending less than halfway back to the midrib. The 15-25 mm (3/5 - 1 in.) long, pale yellow to cream-colored flowers occur in a crowded spike (an unbranched, elongate inflorescence of stalkless flowers). The calyx



Gleason, H.A. *The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the US & Adjacent Canada*. NY Botanical Garden, 1952.



Documented Range of Swamp  
Lousewort



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

(outermost floral whorl) is two-lobed, about 1 cm (4/10 in.) in length, and has a toothed, foliar appendage on each side. The fruit is an ovoid, beaked capsule (a dry, many-seeded fruit derived from a compound pistil) that barely exceeds the calyx in length. Swamp Lousewort flowers from mid August to mid September. The plant is a hemi-parasite whose seedlings must partially rely on other plants in order to develop normally.

#### Range

The range of Swamp Lousewort has been documented as occurring from Massachusetts to southern Ontario, Michigan, Minnesota and North Dakota, and south to North Carolina, Missouri and Nebraska.

#### Similar Species

Wood Betony (*Pedicularis canadensis*) could be mistaken for Swamp Lousewort. However, Wood Betony is a much shorter, hairy plant that grows in clumps. Furthermore, Wood Betony may have all yellow, all red, or both yellow and red flowers, and the lobes of its leaves are cut more than halfway back to the midrib.

#### Habitat in Massachusetts

In general, Swamp Lousewort is a plant of wet areas, including wet woods, swamps, and wet meadows. In particular, it prefers wet meadows with limestone soil. The one current habitat in Massachusetts is an ecotone (an area where two habitat types meet) between the moist shrubby border of a stream and an open pasture; the soil here is circumneutral (near neutral pH) to calcareous. Plant species found growing with Swamp Lousewort at this station include Speckled Alder (*Alnus rugosa*), Meadowsweet (*Spiraea latifolia*), Spotted Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), Blue Vervain (*Verbena hastata*), Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), and Tussock Sedge (*Carex stricta*). Historical habitats in Massachusetts include a wet woods, wet pasture and wet swale.

#### Population Status

Swamp Lousewort is presently listed as "Endangered" in Massachusetts. There are ten historical stations (unverified since 1978) in nine towns and one current station (discovered or relocated since 1978) in the Commonwealth. Swamp Lousewort is also considered rare in Arkansas, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Nebraska, New York, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. It was present historically in Delaware.